

Republic Pictures' Star

A Fawcett Publication

ROCKY LANE

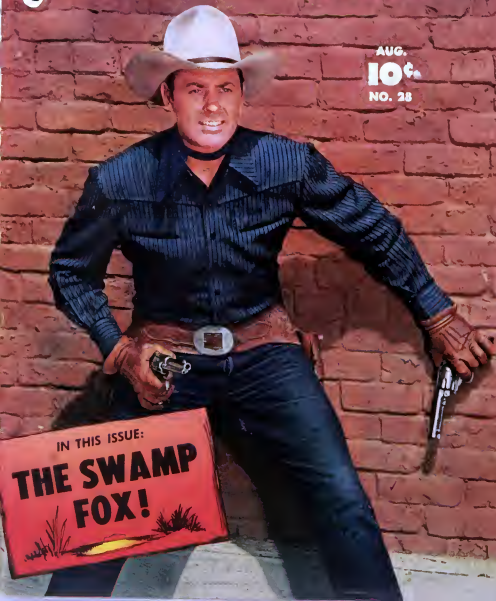
Featuring His Stallion **BLACK JACK**

WESTERN

AUG.

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NO. 28



IN THIS ISSUE:

THE SWAMP FOX!

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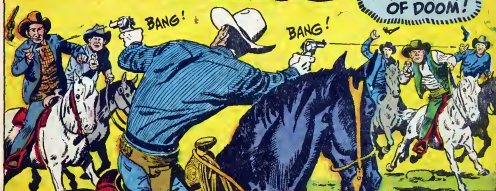
Every effort is made to insure that these comic magazines contain the highest quality of wholesome entertainment.

W. H. Fawcett, Jr., President



REPUBLIC PICTURES' STAR

Rocky Lane



ROCKY LANE
HURTLING INTO A
MAELSTROM OF LEAD
AND THUNDERING HOOF-
BEATS AS HE HITS
THE TRAIL OF
**THE SHIRT
OF DOOM!**

AT THE CHIEF MARSHAL'S OFFICE-

REPORTS HAVE BEEN COMING IN ABOUT A GANG OF ROAD AGENTS WORKING THE SALT LAKE TRAIL, ROCKY! I'M SEND-ING YOU THERE TO CLEAN THEM OUT!

OKAY, CHIEF! I RECKON YOU KNOW HOW I FEEL ABOUT THAT TYPE YARMINT!



GET GOING, BLACK JACK! WE'VE GOT BUSINESS UP UTAH WAY!



MEANWHILE, AT THAT MOMENT IN A FRONTIER TOWN OF UTAH...MILES AWAY--

LOOK AT THE MESS O' PEARLS T'VET DUDE IS WEARING, BOSS!

AND THE PILE O' WINNINGS IN FRONT O' HIM!

YEAH! THAT'S PEARL JACKSON--OUR MEAT TONIGHT! C'MON!



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FORK YORE BRONCS AN' FOLLOW ME, MEN! WE'RE GITTING BACK TO WORK--COVERING THE SALT LAKE TRAIL!

WHUT ABOUT ROBBING PEARL JACKSON, BOSS?

BRONSON'S CASINO



THET GAME WON'T BREAK UP TILL LATE TONIGHT! WE'LL ROB 'IM ON HIS WAY BACK TO HIS RANCH! GIT YORE BANDANAS UP OVER YORE FACES! HYAR COMES A FREIGHTER!



R-ROAD AGENTS! D-DON'T PLUG ME!

TAKE WHUT THE VARMINT'S GOT ON HIM INCLUDING THET RABBIT'S FOOT, SEEING AS HOW HIS LUCK HAS RUN OUT! AN' SEE WHUT HE'S HAULING!

SHORE THING, BOSS!



I RECKON I'LL WEAR THIS RABBIT'S FOOT MYSELF FOR LUCK! WHUT'S IN THE WAGON?

YUH WON'T BELIEVE IT, BUT THE VARMINT IS TOTING OYSTER SHELLS!

I-I-AM HAULING 'EM BACK FROM THE WEST COAST FER A CHICKEN FEED MERCHANT!



WORTHLESS STUFF! SHALL I DRILL HIM, BOSS?

NO, I'VE GOT AN IDEA! DUMP THET LOAD O' OYSTER SHELLS AT THE EDGE O' THE LAKE! THEY'RE GOING TO COME IN MIGHTY HANDY!



THIS SOUNDS PLUMB LOCO TO ME, BOSS! WHUT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

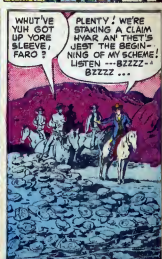
DO AS YORE TOLD! YUH'LL FIND OUT IN DUE TIME!



A FEW MINUTES LATER ---

ALL RIGHT, MISTER! GET GOING AND KEEP YORE MOUTH SHUT OR I'LL FILL IT WITH LEAD!

I'M GOING! DON'T SHOOT!



WHUT'VE YUH GOT UP YORE SLEEVE, FARO?

PLENTY! WE'RE STAKING A CLAIM HYAR AN' THET'S JEST THE BEGINNING OF MY SCHEME! LISTEN ---BZZZZ--- BZZZZ ...

SOME TIME LATER, BACK IN TOWN ---

WHAT DO YOU MEAN ROAD AGENTS STOLE MY LOAD O' OYSTER SHELLS? D'YUH EXPECT ANYONE TO BELIEVE THET?

IT'S THE TRUTH! THE VARMINTS EVEN TOOK MY GOOD LUCK RABBIT'S FOOT!

WHOA, BLACK JACK! THAT TALK SOUNDS MIGHTY INTERESTING!

FEED GRAIN

WHERE DID THESE ROAD AGENTS ROB YOU?

ON THE SALT LAKE TRAIL! THE VARMINTS MADE ME DUMP MY LOAD AT THE EDGE O' THE LAKE!

THANKS, PARDNER! THAT'S ALL I WANT TO KNOW! GET RAMBLING, BLACK JACK! WE'VE GOT THE MYSTERY OF WHO'S LOCO ENOUGH TO STEAL OYSTER SHELLS TO CLEAR UP!

BELLOWING BUFFALO! THAT FREIGHTER WAS TELLING THE TRUTH! THERE ARE THE OYSTER SHELLS UP YONDER AND THE ROAD AGENTS WHO STOLE THEM!

LOOK, FARO! HERE COMES SOME MAVERICK ON OUR TRAIL! MUST BE A LAWMAN, I RECKON!

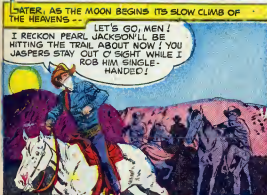
MOSEY DOWN THE TRAIL A BIT! I'LL GIT BEHIND THESE ROCKS AN' JUMP HIM FROM THE BACK! RIGHT!

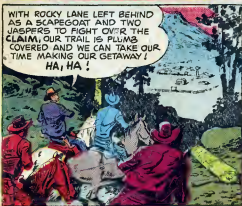
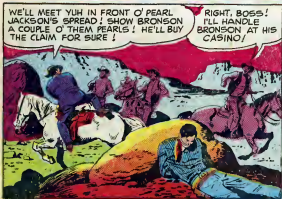
GET YOUR HANDS UP! YOU'RE UNDER ARREST FOR HIGHWAY ROBBERY!

HEH, HEH! THE POLECAT IS A LAWMAN! I'LL SETTLE HIS HASH MIGHTY PRONTO!

WITHOUT WARNING --

DROP THOSE PLOWHANDLES, LAWMAN, AN' SWING DOWN! I'VE GOT YUH PLUMS COVERED!





ON A FEW MINUTES ---

WE MADE A BIG PEARL STRIKE !
SEEING AS HOW WE AIN'T GOT
THE MONEY TO WORK IT, I
FIGURED YUH
MIGHT WANT
TO BUY IT !

A PEARL STRIKE ??
WHAT DO YOU MEAN ?



JUST WHAT I SAID ! WE
FOUND THET GREAT SALT
LAKE IS PLUMB FULL O'
PEARLS LIKE THESE AND
WE STAKED A CLAIM ON IT !
IT MUST'VE BEEN AN
OCEAN MILLIONS O' YEARS
AGO AN' OYSTERS HAVE
BEEN MAKING PEARLS
RIGHT ALONG !

I'LL GIVE
YOU FIFTY
THOUSAND
FOR IT !



IT'S A DEAL !
HYAR'S MY
RIGHTS TO
THE CLAIM
SIGNED
OVER TO
YUH ! FORK
OVER THE
CASH !

HERE IT IS ! LUCKY I
JUST SOLD A BIG
HERD O' CRITTERS !
A ROAD AGENT CLEANED
ME OUT OF MY
PEARLS TONIGHT, BUT
NOW I OWN
MILLIONS OF 'EM !
HA, HA !



THET'S MIGHTY
FUNNY ! WHUT
DID THIS ROAD
AGENT LOOK
LIKE ?

I COULDN'T
SEE HIS FACE
BECAUSE HE
WAS MASKED,
BUT HE WORE A
FANCY BLUE SHIRT!
WHY ?



THAT'S THE SAME POLE-
CAT OF A ROAD AGENT
WHO TRIED TO ROB ME !
I BEAT HIM TO THE DRAW
AN' LEFT HIM HOGTIED
BEHIND SOME ROCKS BY
THE CLAIM !



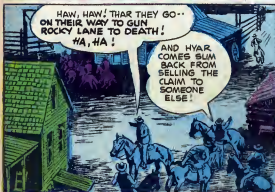
LET'S GO, MEN ! THAT
DANGED ROAD AGENT
IS GOING TO GET
WHAT'S COMING TO
HIM --- A SLUG
THROUGH THE
HEAD !

SHORE !
DRILL THE
VARMINT !



HAW, HAW ! THAR THEY GO--
ON THEIR WAY TO GUN
ROCKY LANE TO DEATH !
HA, HA !

AND HYAR
COMES SUM
BACK FROM
SELLING THE
CLAIM TO
SOMEONE
ELSE !



DID YUH
SELL THE
CLAIM TO
BRONSON ?

YEAH ! HE AND HIS MEN ARE
RIDING OUT THERE NOW !
HA, HA ! THEY'LL BE A HEAP
OF POWDER BURNED WHEN
THEY FIND JACKSON AN' HIS
MEN, THERE, I RECKON !



HALF AN HOUR LATER---

THAT'S THE
VARMINT!
I RECOGNIZE
HIS SHIRT!

IF THOSE JAS-
PERS ARE THE
ROAD AGENTS
COMING BACK,
I'LL JUST ABOUT
HAVE THESE ROPES
CUT IN TIME TO
GIVE THEM THE
SURPRISE OF THEIR
LIVES! THERE!



HE'S GOING
FOR HIS GUNS!
SHOOT TO
KILL, MEN!

NOT SO
FAST,
MISTER!



BANG
BANG
BANG
DROPPED
THOSE GUNS,
YOU
COYOTES!

SUDDENLY, FROM AROUND THE BEND---

CLAIM JUMPERS!
SHOOT TO KILL!

HUH?



DANGER! IF IT DOESN'T
SEEM AS IF THESE SIDE-
WINDERS ARE COMING
FROM ALL OVER!

OW!
M-MY
GUN
HAND!

MY GUN!



NOW START
TALKING--
PRONTO!
WHAT'S
ALL THIS
ABOUT?

I JUST BOUGHT
THIS PEARL
CLAIM OUTRIGHT
FROM ONE O'
FARO FARLEY'S
MEN!

WHAT? I JUST BOUGHT IT
FROM FARO HIMSELF! HE
SAID YOU'RE THE ROAD AGENT
HE HOSTIED-- THE SAME
ONE WHO ROBBED ME
EARLIER TONIGHT!



HOLD ON, FOLKS! I'M SECRET MARSHAL,
ROCKY LANE! MY BADGE IS GONE
WHICH MEANS THE ROAD AGENTS WHO
GOT THE JUMP ON ME MUST HAVE
SWITCHED SHIRTS WITH ME WHILE I
WAS UNCONSCIOUS! THIS IS BEGIN-
NING TO ADD UP TO
PLENTY!



WAS FARO FARLEY WEARING A RABBIT'S FOOT GOOD LUCK CHARM THE LAST TIME YOU SAW HIM?

COME TO THINK OF IT HE WAS! I LEFT HIM AND HIS MEN IN FRONT O' MY SPREAD! WHY?



BECAUSE FARO FARLEY AND HIS MEN ARE THE ROAD AGENTS I'M ON THE TRAIL OF! GET RAMBLING! BLACK JACK, OLD SCOUT! WE'VE GOT A SHOWDOWN I'M PLUMB ANXIOUS TO CALL!



SWIFTLY, ROCKY LANE PICKS UP THE RENEGADES' TRAIL AND CALLS UPON BLACK JACK'S TREMENDOUS SPEED AND ENDURANCE!

GOOD BOY, BLACK JACK, OLD FARO! NO OTHER HORSE COULD HAVE OVERTAKEN THEM TONIGHT! THEIR TRACKS PETER OUT ON THIS MAIN ROAD INTO TOWN, BUT I'VE GOT A HUNCH WHERE TO FIND FARO!



WHOA, BLACK JACK! THIS IS THE END OF THE TRAIL, I RECKON... FOR EITHER FARO FARLEY AND HIS MEN OR ME!



TO PICK UP WHERE I LEFT OFF—YOU AND YOUR HENCHMEN ARE UNDER ARREST, FARO FARLEY!



R-ROCKY LANE! GUN HIM DOWN, MEN!

M-MY HAND! OW! I-I QUIT!

HE'S GREASED LIGHTNING! MY GUN!



H-HOW DID YOU KNOW WHAT TO FIND ME?

THAT WAS PLUMB SIMPLE! WHERE WOULD A JASPER WITH PLENTY OF EASY MONEY AND THE HANDLE OF FARO BE? AT THE NEAREST FARO GAME, NATURALLY!



START MOSEYING OUT THAT DOOR TOWARD THE JAILHOUSE, BUT FIRST HAND OVER EVERYTHING YOU TOOK—INCLUDING MY BADGE AND THAT RABBIT'S FOOT! YOUR LUCK PLUMB RAN OUT WHEN YOU TOOK THAT!



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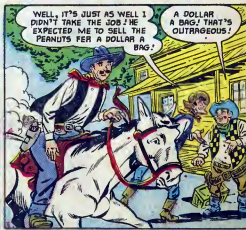
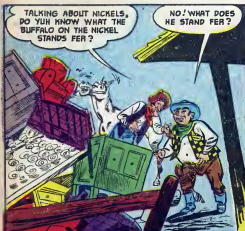
ONE IN EVERY BOX OF

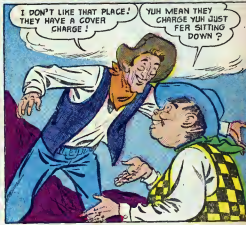


DEE DICKENS IN DISPOSSESSED







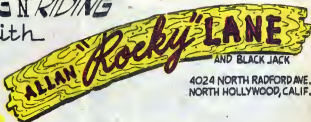




ROCKY WITH BLACK JACK

ROPING'N' RIDING

With



4024 NORTH RADFORD AVE.
NORTH HOLLYWOOD, CALIF.

HOWDY, PARTNERS!

JUST THOUGHT I'D STOP BY ONCE AGAIN. YOU KNOW, THE WEST HAS ALWAYS BEEN A RUGGED LAND, BUT IT'S THE KIND OF LAND THAT MAKES A MAN APPRECIATE GOOD FRIENDS AND STEADY SADDLE-MATES. THOSE FINE LETTERS OF YOURS MAKE MIGHTY PLEASANT READING WHEN A MAN'S OUT ON THE RANGE IN THE LONG WEEKS OF ROUND-UP TIME.

ON THE WAY OVER HERE I PASSED SLIM WOODS. HE WAS SPORTING A NEW HAT AND IT GOT ME TO THINKING BACK A PIECE. THERE WAS A TIME WHEN YOU COULD BE SURE THAT A MAN IN A SMALL SOMBRERO WITH A FLAT BRIM WAS A TEXAN. THE PEAKED CROWN MOST ALWAYS CAME FROM NEBRASKA OR MAYBE MONTANA. WHEN YOU SAW AN HOMBRE WEARING A FLAT, PORK-PIE HAT, YOU COULD BET HE HAILED FROM CALIFORNIA, NEW MEXICO OR ARIZONA. YES, IN THE OLD WEST YOU COULD TELL A MITE ABOUT A STRANGER FROM THE STYLE OF HAT HE WAS WEARING.

I RECKON THAT'S WHY FOLKS TODAY OFTEN THINK THEY CAN TELL ABOUT A MAN FROM THE CLOTHES HE'S WEARING. WELL, THEY'RE WRONG. FOLKS THEN NEVER FIGURED THEY COULD TELL WHAT A MAN WAS LIKE FROM WHAT HE WORE ---- ONLY MAYBE WHERE HE HAILED FROM, OR WHAT KIND OF COUNTRY HE'D BEEN SPENDING TIME IN RECENTLY. THEY KNEW THEY COULDN'T TELL WHAT A MAN WAS LIKE BY HIS CLOTHES. NO, PARTNERS, THAT TAKES TIME, AND KNOWING A MAN. SO DON'T EVER MAKE THE MISTAKE. LOTS OF FOLKS MAKE ---- THAT YOU CAN TELL A MAN'S CHARACTER BY HIS CLOTHES.

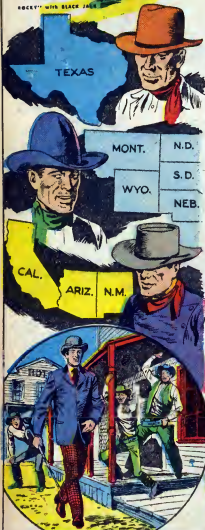
AND TODAY, WHEN FOLKS WEAR PRETTY MUCH THE SAME CUT OF CLOTHES, IT'S EVEN MORE WRONG TO JUDGE A MAN BY THE CLOTHES HE WEARS. YET, SOME FOLKS KEEP DOING JUST THAT. NEXT TIME YOU SEE SOMEONE DOING THAT, YOU MIGHT REMIND THEM IT'S A MIGHTY WRONG WAY TO JUDGE FOLKS.

I'LL HAVE TO BE HEADING BACK NOW AFORE THE SUN SINKS, PARTNERS. I DON'T HAVE TO TELL YOU HOW GOOD IT IS VISITING HERE WITH YOU AGAIN. I'LL BE RIDING THIS WAY NEXT MONTH, TOO, AND LOOKING FOR YOU ALL!

YOUR PAL,

Allan "Rocky" Lane

AND BLACK JACK U



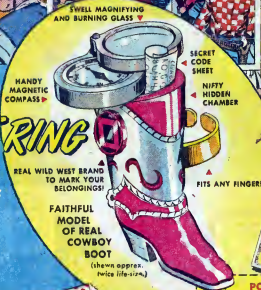


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REPUBLIC PICTURES' STAR

Rocky Lane

and The Swamp Fox

THE SUREST WAY OF CATCHING A FOX IS TO SEIZE HIM IN HIS LAIR! BUT WHEN THE FOX IS A TWO-LEGGED ONE AND HIS LAIR THE TREACHEROUS SWAMPLANDS WHERE ONE MISSTEP MEANS DEATH, ROCKY LANE HAS TO MATCH SKILL AGAINST CUNNING TO BATTLE --- THE SWAMP FOX!



SECRET MARSHAL ROCKY LANE SKIRTS THE EDGE OF THE TREACHEROUS SWAMPLANDS ONE DAY ---

HELP ---
(GASP)---
HELP ME---
QUICKLY!

WHOA, BLACK JACK!
SOMEBODY'S IN
TROUBLE IN THE
SWAMPS!



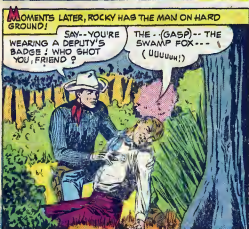
THAT SWAMP IS NO PLACE FOR YOU, BLACK JACK! YOU STAY HERE WHILE I LOOK!

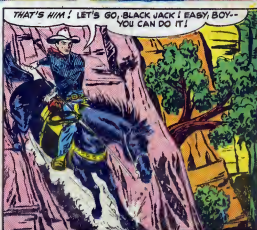
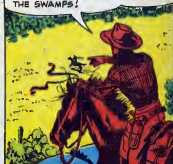
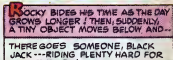
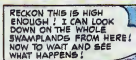
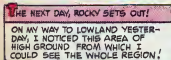
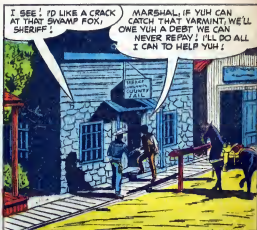


SOON, DEEP IN THE SWAMPLANDS---

THERE HE IS! AND HE'S NEARLY UNDER! HOLD ON, STRANGER! I'LL GET YOU OUT!







BLACK JACK CARRIES HIS MASTER DOWN THE PERILOUS DROP AND ---

GOOD BOY, BLACK JACK!
AFTER HIM---HE SEES US NOW!
I WONDER HOW THE VARMINT GOT
OUT OF THE SWAMPS EARLIER
WITHOUT US
SEEING HIM!



THERE HE GOES---LEAVING HIS HORSE AND RUNNING
INTO THE SWAMPLANDS; I'LL HAVE TO DO THE
SAME WITH YOU, BLACK JACK; THAT SWAMPS
NO PLACE FOR YOU!



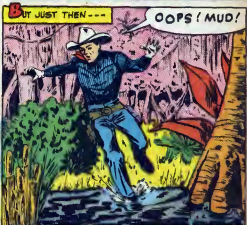
MOMENTS LATER, ROCKY FOLLOWS INTO THE
TREACHEROUS SWAMPLANDS!

YUH'LL NEVER CATCH ME, YUH FOOL! BETTER
GO BACK
WHILE YUH
CAN!



BUT JUST THEN ---

OOPS! MUD!



I TOLD YUH---
HAW-HAW-HAW!
NOW MY PETS
WILL GIT YUH!
SO LONG,
JUGHEAD!

ALLIGATORS!
THE PLACE IS
SWARMING WITH
THEM! I'LL BE A
GONER IF I---
UHH---DON'T GET
MY LEG FREE, PRONTO!



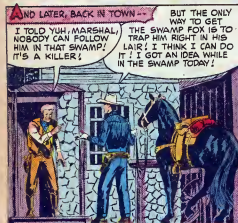
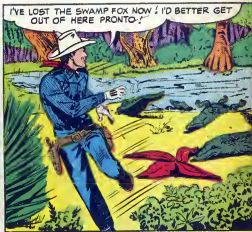
IT--IT'S COMING; AND SO
ARE THOSE ALLIGATORS!

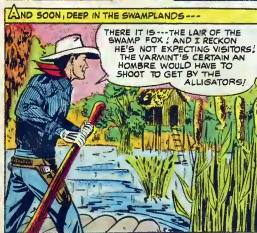
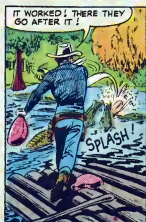
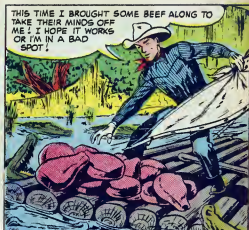


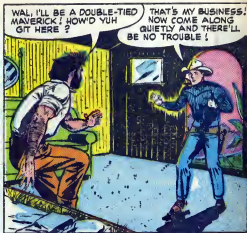
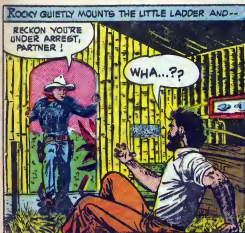
WITH HIS LAST OUNCE OF STRENGTH,
ROCKY FREES HIS LEG FROM THE
SUCKING OOZE OF THE SWAMP AS--

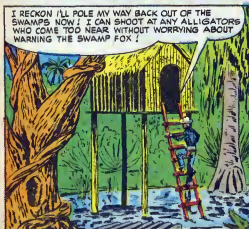
THERE! GOT IT
FREE! AND JUST
IN TIME!





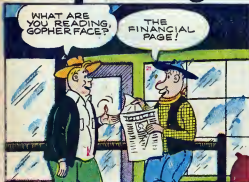






Gopher face

**BALEFUL
EXISTENCE!**



SPECIAL OFFER!

**YOU...
CAN GET
"ROCKY'S"**



**PICTURE WITH "BLACK JACK"
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BADLANDS BLACKMAIL

By Walter Farmer

BRICKTOP JONES was a stranger in town, but this caused no comment for there were many strangers there. It was a boom town that had sprung up at the edge of the gorge below the number one shaft of the New Bonanza Mines. The town was called New Bonanza. Bricktop had registered in the frame hotel and now he was leaning idly against a porch post, watching the motley passersby—brown-skinned cattlemen, tough-looking miners, cold-eyed gunslingers, traders, trappers, prospectors.

A horseman was cantering up Main Street. Bricktop took him in at a glance, a big-boned, hard man with ugly, black eyebrows. But the horse, a strong-limbed bay, took most of his attention. It was the handsomest animal Bricktop had ever seen.

As the horseman approached, a little, wizened man wearing a black derby and a black, tight-fitting coat, stepped to the edge of the board sidewalk and waved to the rider to stop. The wave was imperious and Bricktop looked for a wave of temper in the rider, reflecting that the big man could swallow the little man in one gulp. But under the black eyebrows only appeared an expression of annoyance and apprehension as he said, "Howdy, Mr. Bargain."

"Nice looking bay you've got there," said the wizened man.

"Huh? Oh, well, he looks nice, Mr. Bargain, but one leg is bad and he's a breather. You wouldn't want him, Mr. Bargain."

The man addressed as Mr. Bargain cocked his derby hat and a wicked gleam came into his eye. "Oh, I want him all right. But if he's as bad as you say, he can't be worth much. I'll give you fifty dollars cash." He started peeling money from his pocket.

The big man grumbled and protested, but his protests were weak and Mr. Bargain handed over the cash and said, "Fifty dollars is a whole lot for a gimpy breather. I expect you'll throw in the saddle as well."

Bricktop Jones could scarcely believe his eyes as the big man dismounted, pocketed the money, turned and strode rapidly away. Mr. Bargain, chuckling, led the horse in the opposite direction. As he turned to move off, his gimlet eyes lit on Bricktop and stared hard for a moment, then he turned his head and was gone.

"Well, I'll be a ring-tailed ranny!" exclaimed Bricktop. He hardly realized he had spoken aloud when a voice at his side drawled,

"Mr. Bargain and his deals always are an astonishment to strangers. But you'll get used to them if you remain long in New Bonanza."

Bricktop turned to face a bronzed man whose iron-gray hair showed under his broad hat. The man wore a silver star on his vest. Bricktop asserted, "If I'm any judge of a cayuse, that one was worth ten times what he paid."

"No doubt," drawled the lawman. "Mr. Bargain didn't get his name from chance."

"You mean this happens all the time?" asked Bricktop. "I'd have guessed he had something on that hombre that sold him the bay."

"A guessing game like that might get you into trouble, mister," said the lawman, "especially if you happened to be guessing right. But don't be surprised if Mr. Bargain offers you a jitney apiece for those gold spurs you're wearing."

Instinctively Bricktop Jones looked down at his boots and the glittering rowels. The lawman was walking away. Bricktop pushed his hat back and scratched his curly, flaming hair.

It was about an hour later. Bricktop Jones was in his hotel room and the knock at the door surprised him for he hadn't been expecting any visitors. With the instinct for self-preservation born of long years in the wild frontier country, he swiftly took a station beside the door and had his Colt in his hand before he called, "Come in!"

The door opened and a little man in a black coat and black derby entered, with his hands above his head.

"Mr. Bargain!" exclaimed Bricktop.

"Ah, I see you've heard of me," responded Mr. Bargain. "That'll make things easier. I have no firearms and you may take my word for it or search me. In any case, I'd feel easier if you holstered that six-gun."

Bricktop Jones satisfied himself that Mr. Bargain was unarmed. Then he invited his visitor to take the only chair while he propped himself on the iron-posted bed. "What can I do for you?" asked Bricktop.

"I don't beat around the bush," responded Mr. Bargain. "I've come to buy your gold spurs."

"Not for sale," responded Bricktop.

Mr. Bargain smiled an oily smile and his little eyes were pin-points of venom as he said, "I think you will reconsider, Mr. Carrot Kane!"

Bricktop hid all emotion behind a poker face as he responded, "You've made a mistake, Mr. Bargain. My handle is Bricktop Jones."

"That may be your handle now," asserted Mr. Bargain. "But have a look at this!" From inside his black jacket he drew forth a handbill. Printed on it was an unmistakable picture of Bricktop Jones. And in big type was the legend: "WANTED: CARROT KANE."

Bricktop's hand seemed instinctively to move toward his holster, but Mr. Bargain made a restraining gesture. "This is not my only copy of the dodger," he said. "If anything happens to me, the other copy goes straight to the law. That's my life insurance."

"I see," said Bricktop, rubbing his chin reflectively. "Blackmail."

"No, indeed," responded Mr. Bargain. "I pay for everything I get, just as I intend to pay for your gold spurs. It's entirely legal. Let us just say that my knowledge of the details of a man's past helps to keep him from being cheated."

"I get the whole layout," mused Bricktop. "In a mushroom town like this, there are bound to be plenty of men running away from the law. You get a line on their pasts. But instead of turning them in, you quietly bleed them of their possessions. That's how you got the bay horse today."

"Let us not bandy words," suggested Mr. Bargain. "I'm ready to buy your spurs."

Bricktop was awakened by the pounding at the door. A glance at the window told him it was night, but he had no idea what time it was. A drawing voice said, "Mr. Bricktop Jones. Open up, this is the law." Bricktop had no doubt that it was the voice of the sheriff, so he made no move for his guns as he unlocked and opened the door. The lawman, with revolver in hand, stepped in, followed by two deputies.

"You're under arrest on suspicion of murder, Mr. Jones," said the sheriff.

"Mr. Bargain?" asked Bricktop.

"That's right," declared the lawman. "And maybe I'd better warn you that anything you say can be held against you."

Bricktop gestured toward his gunbelt and holsters hanging on an iron bedpost. He seemed unmindful of the lawman's warning about talking. "There are my shooting irons,

sheriff. You can take charge of them while I get my pants on. I reckon it was in the cards for Mr. Bargain to get murdered sooner or later. His blackmail business was too good to last. I reckon you must have plenty of suspects besides me."

"No," said the sheriff. "You're the main suspect, Bricktop. I'm kind of surprised, as I fancy myself a judge of men and I never tabbed you for an owlhoot or a killer. But Mr. Bargain left behind a packet of papers to be opened on his death; a kind of black will, you might say. It's full of handbills and reward notices and it proves that all his customers are wanted by the law. I'll round them up in good time. But he practically wrote out a murder warrant for you. He must not have died right after he was shot. He scratched the letter 'B' on the board floor—and he did it with one of your gold spurs!"

Bricktop frowned and looked at the floor. Then as his face brightened, he exclaimed, "Sheriff, that clears me! The bay cayuse Mr. Bargain bought today is missing, isn't it? Send one of your deputies to the telegraph office. Spread the word to all nearby towns. Pick up the man on the bay horse. He's the murderer!"

"The bay is missing," said the sheriff. "It—get going, Jake. Get to the telegraph office. Send that message."

"You see," continued Bricktop, "Mr. Bargain must have known he was dying. He hadn't much strength. He would never have tried to write a long word like 'Bricktop,' scratching it out the hard way with a spur, when he could have done 'Jones,' so much easier. So he was trying to write 'Bay,' hoping you'd understand to look for the man on the bay horse."

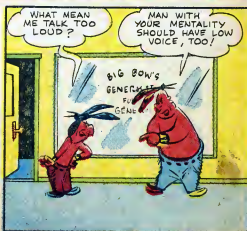
"Well and good. We'll get that hombre," said the sheriff. "But you're still under arrest, Bricktop. We've got a dodger here that says you are really 'Carrot Kane.'"

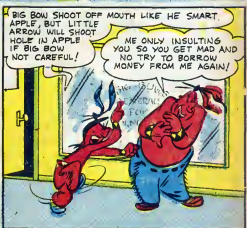
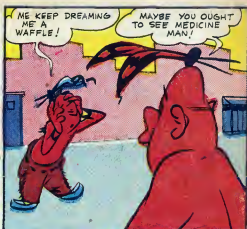
BRICKTOP chuckled. "I had that printed myself, and I can prove it. You see, it was the only way I could get into a band of rustling murderers for a job I had recently down Texas way, so I could get the goods on them. I'm really a special United States Marshal!"

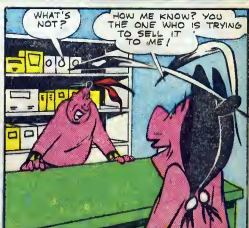
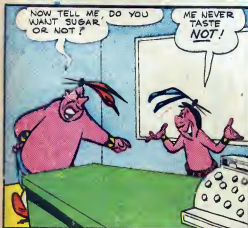
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